RAIN BARREL MAINTENANCE

For Help Call _____ Or E-Mail _____

Rain barrels have three basic parts:

Input: A large, screened opening at the top (which receives rain water from the downspout).

Overflow: An outlet a few inches from the top which drains excess water (usually via a 1 3/8 " diameter flexible tube which feeds local vegetation, or is directed back to the lower part of the downspout).

Drain: A 5/8 inch outlet about an inch above the bottom, generally attached to a soaker-hose via a shut-off valve. Some rain barrels drain via a spigot about 18 inches above the bottom (but will still have a bottom drain with plug or a shut off valve).

MAINTENANCE

Monthly (especially 1 to 2 days after rain stops)

- Check water level (if the water level is more than a couple inches above the drain, then the soaker hose may need to be back-flushed, or drill a few 3/16 inch diameter holes through the hose to allow the barrel to drain faster. **CAUTION: use a battery powered drill!**
- Check Input Screen (remove and clean, if necessary)
- Check that overflow hose is securely attached and is not kinked or miss-directed (in a heavy rain, the overflow should typically be capable of handling a water flow of 10 to 12 gal / minute).
- After a very heavy rain, check for rim overflow (which will occur if the barrel's overflow system is overwhelmed). In this event, you may want to add an additional overflow outlet, an in-line diverter, or otherwise manage the rim overflow so it does not cause any damage.

Spring (after hard freeze threat is over)

- Flush barrel, inspect base for level and structural integrity (55 gal. Of water weighs 459 lbs., thus presenting a safety hazard if not properly supported).

Winter (before first hard freeze)

- Empty barrel and remove hose from drain (leave drain cock Open). Be aware that any rain or snow-melt water will pass directly through the barrel and out through the open drain. It may be necessary to make provision to route the drain water away from the base of the barrel: **Do not** use a garden hose for this purpose, since an ice plug could form, causing water to back up into the barrel, which could freeze, and possibly destroy the barrel.